

HEALTH PANEL

6 SEPTEMBER 1999

Present: Councillors Mills (Chairman), Barnard,
Blatchford, Mrs Doyle, Fawcett,
Mrs Shillcock, Thompson, Veakins and
Wheaton

Also present: Councillor McCormack

Berkshire Health Authority: Ed Macalister Smith

Bracknell Primary Care Group: Diane Hedges
Dr Roger Halliwell

East Berkshire Community NHS Trust: Keith Pitchford

Apologise for absence were received from:
Margaret Edwards (Heatherwood & Wexham
Park Hospitals NHS Trust)
Christina Pond (East Berkshire NHS Trust)

8. Substitute Members

The Committee noted that Keith Pitchford would henceforth be representing the East Berkshire Community NHS Trust instead of Phillip Burgess.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 1999 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

10. Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation (Item 3)

The Panel received a report summarising the key elements contained within the Government's White Paper on public health, "Saving Lives – Our Healthier Nation". The White Paper followed the Green Paper, "Our Healthier Nation" which explicitly acknowledged the social, economic and environmental causes of ill health and its links with poverty and stressed the need to tackle ill health through employment, crime prevention, housing and education. The Green Paper had also introduced the concept of Health Improvement Programmes and a duty of partnership between local and health authorities.

The Panel noted that the White Paper was likely to shape its future work.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

11. **Developing Health Services for the People of Bracknell Forest (Item 4)**

The Panel received a report advising it that, at the Full Council Meeting on 21 July 1999, the Council considered and passed a motion calling for the development of health care services for the people of Bracknell Forest. The motion read :-

This Council:

- i) recognises the need for a general hospital in Bracknell Forest;*
- ii) further acknowledges the wide public support for such a local facility;*
- iii) instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister and Health Secretary asking them to instruct the Berkshire Health Authority and other appropriate Government organisations to immediately take the necessary action to provide this much needed hospital; and*
- iv) mandates the Council's Health Panel to monitor all responses and asks its Chairman to report progress at each meeting of the Full Council over the next two year period.*

The Panel was advised that, in putting this motion to the Full Council, Members were responding to a widespread view in the local community that there was and had been a longstanding wish to see such provision available in the local area. The Council's intention was to set out clearly its recognition of the wishes of local people and its commitment to work with the Health Service to promote the issue of local health care provision and to explore all the opportunities open to the Council in its working relationship with the Health Services.

The Panel was reminded that the Health Authority was committed for the foreseeable future to the retention of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals and given the issues relating to size of population and catchment areas, there was no prospect of establishing a new district general hospital in Bracknell unless the other two hospitals were to close. Instead, the Authority was anxious to look at health needs and patterns of care to develop and enhance services provided for the people of Bracknell by making the best use of the available resources. The Primary Care Group would be seeking to achieve this. It was hoped that this work would go a long way towards providing the majority of the services sought within Bracknell by the hospital campaigners without actually providing a hospital. It was stressed that the Primary Care Group was carrying out a needs assessment and aimed to ensure that this would lead to staff and resources being put where it was required.

In response to concerns expressed about the availability of skilled staff, it was acknowledged on behalf of the Health Authority that this was an issue which was recognised. The most specialist services were generally best delivered in large centres, but this was often in conflict with the wish to see such services provided locally.

The Chairman stressed that in putting the motion to the Council, it had been hoped to launch an informed debate on the issues so that the public would be aware of what could and what could not be provided. He recognised that there was a longstanding wish within the community for the provision of a hospital. The current debate provided an opportunity to educate the public about the reasons why, even if that

were not to be possible, some, if not all the services sought, could be provided locally. It was agreed that the provision of easily accessible services locally was the aspiration of all concerned. It was, therefore, important that the work currently underway within the Primary Care Group should seek to maximise services in whatever way was possible.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12. Health Partnerships in Bracknell Forest – Health Planning (Item 5)

The Panel considered a report setting out the background to its role in working with the health services to improve the health of the community. It was advised that specific and measurable targets had been set for improving the health of Bracknell Forest's residents through the Health Improvement Programme. This document had been published by the Berkshire Health Authority in the spring of 1999. In addition the Primary Care Group, through its Clinical Governance Programme, was setting targets for improving the quality and consistency of primary care practice in the local area.

In order to maximise the efforts of the NHS and Local Authority in achieving health improvements it was proposed that a jointly funded post should be created for a fixed period to facilitate the process. Without such a focus, there were concerns that the efforts of the individual agencies along with the voluntary sector, commerce and other interested parties could lead to duplication and wasted effort.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the proposals for shared funding of a Bracknell Forest Health Partnership post, taking note of the financial allocations between Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the NHS be supported;
- (ii) the Strategy and Policy Committee be requested to allocate the resources required to sustain this post for a 2 year fixed term period, to be reviewed after 12 months; and,
- (iii) the management arrangements for the post as outlined in the report be endorsed.

13. The Democratic Health Network: A New Initiative on Partnership Working (Item 6)

The Panel considered a report advising it that the Local Government Information Unit, of which the Council was a Member, was developing a new network to support the developing relationships between local authorities and the health Service. The network was intended to provide policy advice, information, access to current research and act as a forum for the exchange of good practice ideas and other initiatives, having regard to the new obligations and responsibilities placed on the local authority to work with the Health Service to promote the health and well being of the local population.

The Panel's approval was sought to subscribe to the new service.

RESOLVED that the payment of a subscription of £625 for membership of the Democratic Health Network be approved.

14. Health Partnership Initiatives – GP Referral (Item 7)

The Panel considered a report seeking approval to enter into a partnership initiative between the Council, Berkshire Health Authority and Bracknell Primary Care Group. The project was to develop a co-ordinated GP Referral Scheme operating across the Borough and would involve joint finance between the partners. It was noted that the Primary Care Group could not give a guarantee of further funding in 2000/01, but that, given the nature of the post it was likely that further funding would be forthcoming subject to an annual review of the post verifying its value. It was therefore agreed that the Panel would recommend to the Strategy & Policy Committee that the Council should continue to fund its proportion of the cost of the post on an ongoing basis subject to a satisfactory annual review.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the proposal to establish a co-ordinated GP Referral Scheme for Bracknell Forest by the appointment of a GP Referral Co-ordinator be supported;
- (ii) the start up and ongoing revenue costs be based on an equal partnership approach between the local authority and the Primary Care Group;
- (iii) the post be supported financially by the Council on an ongoing basis subject to it being reviewed annually to ensure that the anticipated benefits continue to be derived; and,
- (iv) the Strategy & Policy Committee be requested to release the £16,000 required to meet the cost of the Council's contribution towards the cost of the GP Referral Co-ordinator for the remainder of 1999/2000 and £15,000 per annum thereafter on an ongoing basis, subject to satisfactory annual review by the Panel.

The meeting commenced at 7:00pm
and concluded at 8:20pm

CHAIRMAN